



UNITED TO END HOMELESSNESS

New York City's next Mayor and City Council will confront unprecedented levels of homelessness. By the end of 2012, more than 57,000 people, including more than 22,000 children, slept each night on the street or in a City shelter, the largest homeless shelter population ever recorded. The number of homeless New Yorkers in shelters each night has increased 58% since 2002, and the number of homeless families has increased 66% over the same period. An additional 5,000 people sleep each night in other shelters (including runaway and unaccompanied homeless youth, domestic violence survivors, and people living with AIDS), and thousands more sleep on the streets or in other public spaces. New York City's youth shelter system is overwhelmed and a record 80% of domestic violence emergency shelter residents are leaving shelters with no safe place to go. And none of these statistics include the thousands of New Yorkers displaced by Hurricane Sandy, many of whom were low-income and in need of long-term housing aid.

While there are many contributing factors to homelessness, the high cost of housing and the lack of rental assistance remain at the heart of the problem. Unlike in the past, the overwhelming majority of homeless households have no access to affordable housing making it nearly impossible for most families to move from shelter into permanent housing. And compounding the harm caused to thousands of vulnerable children and adults, the City is paying a huge financial price for record homelessness. In FY 2012, New York City spent more than \$908 million on shelter and services for homeless people, a 68% increase from FY 2002. In addition, New York City's housing affordability problems have worsened significantly over the past decade, putting more people at risk of homelessness. According to Census Bureau data, 55% of renter households are spending more than 30% of their income on rent, a one-third increase since 2000, and 28% of renters are spending more than half of their income on rent.

Without a decent and stable place to live, our neighbors and friends struggle to lead healthy lives, obtain good jobs, and attain a proper education for themselves and their children. Prioritizing homeless policies and programs is smart planning for our communities. Experts know it's more cost-effective to permanently house homeless individuals and families than to let them cycle through expensive emergency housing systems. This is sound fiscal policy and good for all New Yorkers, too.

There is hope for the future. New York City has historically been a leader in innovative policies and programs – like permanent supportive housing and targeted affordable housing programs – that have successfully reduced the homeless population in the past. Confronting New York City's record homelessness will require strong leadership and smart, cost-effective policies.

This platform outlines the necessary steps the next Administration must take to end the homelessness crisis.

1. MAKE ENDING HOMELESSNESS AND EXPANDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING A TOP MAYORAL PRIORITY

2. EFFORTS TO END HOMELESSNESS SHOULD INCLUDE

a. Programs to prevent homelessness:

- Increase funding for homelessness prevention programs, including legal services, eviction and foreclosure prevention, and aftercare services for the formerly homeless.

b. Expand and improve housing assistance resources:

- Create a new local rent subsidy for homeless people that is ongoing, affordable, flexible, portable, and accessible.
- Reinstate and expand priority set-asides for homeless individuals and families within existing Federal, State, and City programs, including one-third of available public housing units and Section 8 vouchers, and at least one-fifth of units in HPD-assisted private housing resources.

- Reassess and redesign the City’s system for placing extremely low-income and homeless households in set-aside units in tax credit buildings, making the process more efficient for landlords and ensuring that this subsidized resource is utilized to meet the City’s housing priorities.
- c. Guarantee adequate shelter, health care and services for all people experiencing homelessness:
- Ensure access to emergency shelter without deterrent and bureaucratic barriers for all families, unaccompanied youth, and single adults who lack alternative housing options that are both available and suitable to their needs, and ensure access to drop-in centers for unsheltered homeless individuals.
 - Commit sufficient resources for all homeless shelter systems in the City, including those administered by the Department of Homeless Services, Human Resources Administration, and the Department of Youth and Community Development, ensuring that all vulnerable populations have a safe place to stay.
 - Commit adequate resources for social services for all homeless people including the availability of comprehensive health and mental health care, education, job training, and employment resources.
- d. Continue investment in supportive housing:
- Create a NY-NY IV agreement that increases the supply of supportive housing for homeless people, including persons living with disabilities, persons living with mental illness, families, unaccompanied youth, young adults, veterans, seniors, survivors of domestic violence, and people exiting correctional facilities.
 - Support state efforts to ensure sufficient funding to fulfill the NY-NY III agreement and to invest Medicaid savings in supportive housing development and services.
 - Ensure that existing supportive housing tenants continue to get the services they need by bringing contract rates up to current costs.
- e. Preserve and create more affordable housing for New York’s lowest income households:
- Protect and expand capital development funding for low-income to extremely low-income affordable housing production, with a priority on creating permanent housing opportunities for the lowest income households.¹
 - Create a reinvestment fund that automatically allocates any shelter savings towards a fund for new and expanded permanent housing programs.
 - Develop and implement a strategy for converting and rehabbing shelters into permanent supportive housing.
 - Standardize the City’s and State’s process of siting new development in communities, giving more predictability to neighborhoods and developers alike.
 - Institute an annual vacant building count and implement policies to encourage the sale and use of vacant and underutilized spaces to meet the housing needs of low-income New Yorkers.
 - Support state legislation for a 30 percent rent cap for recipients of the HASA subsidy.
 - Support the comprehensive platforms to preserve and produce affordable housing put forth by the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, the Real Rent Reform campaign, and Housing First.
- f. Improve planning around natural disaster-induced homelessness:
- Any disaster-related homeless housing assistance should be fully integrated into the City’s overall strategy to assist homeless people regardless of the cause of homelessness.
 - Disaster-related housing assistance should include undocumented disaster victims.
 - Ensure that, as part of rebuilding and recovery from Sandy and other disasters, affordable rental housing is a priority.

3. CREATE AN INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS that includes government, non-profit, and consumer stakeholders to implement a comprehensive plan to end homelessness. Unifying priorities by sharing data and resources across agencies will enhance system-wide efficiencies. The comprehensive plan will clearly delineate policy priorities and funding needs for preservation, new construction, affordability, and a timeline with milestones.

*To learn more, visit our website at www.endhomelessnessnyc.org
or email us at unitedtoendhomelessnessnyc@hsunited.org*

¹ For a family of 4 “extremely low-income” refers to those earning \$24,550 per year or less (30% of Area Median Income (AMI)); “low-income” refers to those earning \$49,080 (60% AMI).